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THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERBERT SPENCER[1]

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"AS I take my pen in hand"—to begin with a quotation neither learned nor, so far as I know, from Spencer—I recall a course of lectures, heard in graduate school days well over a quarter of a century ago and given by Josiah Royce, on the philosophy of nature. The first half of the year Royce devoted to Benedict Spinoza, of the seventeenth century (1632–1677), advocate of an essentially mechanicalistic or, as Royce put it, "world-formula" view of the universe; and the second half, to Herbert Spencer, of the nineteenth century (1820–1903), advocate of a biologic or, since there is a difference, biologistic theory of the universe. The lectures on Spinoza were among the most helpful lectures I ever heard. Royce's understanding of the great Jewish philosopher was keen and sympathetic without being uncritical. Spencer, I felt then and feel now more definitely, he failed to appreciate either pro or con. I remember hearing him say that Spencer was a very important man, being a thinker whom all thinkers, scientists and philosophers, found it necessary, however easy, to refute. The scientists, it seems, found him too philosophical; the philosophers, too scientific; so that his success may be said to have fallen between the two. Thus he was actually and successfully neither, because on the whole both. Just such in-between-ness, moreover, if I may manufacture such a word, is a general character of Spencer's work, to be seen in other ways besides this of its falling in between science and philosophy. But, as

[1] One of three papers read at the annual "Memorial Meeting," celebrating the centenary of John Tyndall, 1820–1905, and Herbert Spencer, 1820–1903, of the Research Club, University of Michigan. The other papers were "John Tyndall," by Professor A. W. Smith, and "Herbert Spencer," by Professor Charles H. Cooley, the former published in this Journal, the latter to be published in the American Journal of Sociology.

to Royce's view of Spencer's importance, it amounted, as I recall, to little more than this. By common consent Spencer can not be or at least twenty-five years ago could not be overlooked; for right views of the great things of life, including the universe, the ground must first be cleared of Herbert Spencer. Here doubtless was real tribute, but hardly flattering; it lacked, to say the least, direct enthusiasm.

Royce's view, furthermore, while by no means without some foundation, was nevertheless in effect distinctly unfair, being at least only half of the truth. Royce himself, I am sure, would not wish to be taken too seriously. Of course his bias was always more for the great continental idealists, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, than for the English empiricists, Bacon, Locke, Mill, Spencer. Still, this bias aside, Spencer's importance is not really to be measured so much by his formal doctrines and their technical contributions to either science or philosophy, although these have had some value, as by the large enterprise which they both manifest on Spencer's part and have invited among others, the unusually general attention which, as embodied in the Synthetic Philosophy, they attracted in England and especially in America, as well as on the continent, the new directions to which they effectively turned scientific interest, and their generally transitional significance. To say just a word in passing about Spencer on the continent, I can not forget that after my Harvard studies in philosophy, during the years of which I was constantly sent to the works of the great continentals, I went to Berlin and Heidelberg only to find that the continentals were frequently referring their students to Locke, Spencer and others across the Channel with great respect.

Now, in general, "in-between-ness," referred to here as a typical character of Spencer's work, will no doubt appear more or less ignominious; but sometimes it is really significant and productive. Thus, as to Spencer's success falling between science and philosophy, while scientists never accepted or, if accepting, soon outgrew his science, finding it too philosophical, they were for a long time very generally disposed to accept much of his philosophy, his agnosticism, his evolutional perfectionism, his general mechanicalism. Especially was his agnosticism peculiarly grateful to them. "If religion and science are to be reconciled," he declared, "the basis of reconciliation must be this deepest, widest and most certain of all facts—that the Power which the Universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable," that it is "not a relative but an absolute mystery." Again, with flattering respect for the knowledge

of the scientist: "He [the scientist], more than any other, truly *knows* that in its ultimate essence nothing can be known." Also: "Ultimate scientific ideas . . . are all representative of realities that can not be apprehended." If the scientists so welcomed Spencer's philosophical isms, the philosophers on their side, while objecting to his notion of philosophy as only the general science, science of the sciences, welcomed his special scientific compilations and formulations, buying his large volumes, contributions to biology, psychology, sociology, as well as his *First Principles,* generously. So was Spencer, scientist and philosopher, in each one of his two capacities a prophet not without honor save in his own country and this, especially in his time, was important. Such mediation has at times great value. Spencer ranks, in other words, among those who have made the two countries, science and philosophy, realize that they must reckon with each other; each admitting the other to its counsels. How fitting, I venture therefore to reflect, that this club, catholic in its organization, should celebrate the centenary of the great Synthetic Philosopher.

A second evidence of Spencer's in-between-ness has to do, not now with any general relation between science and philosophy, but with the fact of Spencer's thinking coming at a time of transition in the history of science, when one scientific point of view as the commanding and leading view, directly and vitally interesting, was becoming only secondary and mediate, yielding the leadership to another and quite different view, and so when philosophy was also on a new venture. To explain my meaning here I must seem to digress a little and also I may be telling most of you here only an old story.

Philosophy has ever been a handmaid, albeit rather independent and not always even respectful in her service, being quite critical and correctional at times, of positive doctrine in one form or another. When in such service, moreover, philosophy's irrepressible and to her mistress often very discomfiting instinct has been for universal applications, for widest possible—and impossible!—generalization, for liberation of the spirit from the always too special and confining letter; and her service itself, accordingly, has been, however obstinate the mistress, what our genial professor of music with his lectures on "Creative Listening" would be sure to style a creative service. Thus, first, in the history of Christendom philosophy was handmaid of the Church, *ancilla ecclesiæ,* and of the Church's peculiar positive doctrine, its orthodox and dogmatic theology, which asserted, *as should be remarked with special care for the sake of the contrast to be pointed out hereafter,* a single

first cause and put human life under constraint of a single institutional uniformity, essentially mechanicalistic and local in character. Then, leaving her first position, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries she took service under mathematics and natural mechanics, for which—*now mark the contrast*—causation and uniformity were no longer single and institutional or locally mechanical, but general, that is, extended to include all nature. So came into the logic of science the now well-known principles of *universal* causation and of the uniformity of ALL *nature*. Science has never been without her debt to theology!

But, thirdly, in this story of Christendom's great adventure in civilization or, more narrowly, of philosophy's creative service of science, and now with special interest for our study of Spencer, biology—under its conception of organism in distinction from mechanism, an organism being supermechanical or being mechanism become general and naturally, innately versatile, versatile even to the point of genius, and of evolution in distinction from only once-upon-a-time creation—biology, I say, became the mistress of the handmaid of all positive doctrine, philosophy. And a fickle servant indeed seems that handmaid, so often through the centuries changing her place. But, say what you will of her or of other handmaids, our story does show an effective and creative service. Theology, mechanics, biology; institutional conformity, natural conformity, natural versatility,—these do make a wonderful succession at once of positive interests and of bases of productive generalization. Well might we stop and dwell at length upon them and their progression. But stop we may not. It now concerns us only that to the period of philosophy's third service or perhaps more exactly to the later stages of the transition from the second to the third, Spencer and his Synthetic Philosophy, at once mechanicalistic in form and biologistic in meaning, seem to belong.[2]

[2] In an article, already published in this journal, May, 1920, "Philosophy in the Service of Science," I have tried to tell the story, given so briefly here, in more detail and, so to speak, with an additional chapter. Thus I have, among other things, pointed out that at the present time philosophy seems even once more to have changed her place, the new science, psychology, become *a natural science*, being now the mistress instead of biology and the conscious individual succeeding the biologist's organism in the sequence of ruling conceptions. The whole sequence, then, from theology to psychology, besides being interesting for Spencer's place and part in it, is interesting also as a record of man's original aloofness from nature gradually turned into the closest intimacy. Certainly psychology as a natural science quite outdoes biology and organic evolution in its intimations of the unity of man and nature.

Of course the biologism of the later nineteenth century had its preparatory antecedents. On the continent Leibnitz, Kant and Hegel, not to mention others, had transformed and so prepared logic and metaphysics for the new intellectual order. In England Hume and the Utilitarians, including notably John Stuart Mill, had been serviceable in their way, while nearly or quite contemporary with Spencer (1820–1905) we have Darwin (1809–1882) and Huxley (1825–1895) and—in France—Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Possibly the Scotch geologist, Sir Charles Lyell (1797–1875) should be named also, although in his work Spencer appears to have found more to reject and even resent than to accept. There was also the great physicist, Tyndall, 1820–1893. But, to speak at large, the biological theories of the time in their logic or their metaphysics or their science, implied or explicit, were obviously mechanicalistic, as in Spencer's case; although, significantly, with the mechanicalistic biologism, there was always in evidence, yet hardly in the leading rôle, a contemporary vitalism or occultism. Lyell was an early exponent of this and certainly biology, substituting the super-mechanical organism for mechanism, could hardly avoid some vitalism hidden or indirect when not direct and open. This might seem reactionary; but also progress demanded it and, when the mechanicalists themselves denied and opposed, others were bound to rise up and protest. The very mechanicalists, moreover, had to admit some vitalistic principle into their houses, opening a back door for it, however tightly closed they might be keeping their front doors. Spencer himself, as I shall show, was not without his own indirect vitalism or occultism.

Spencer's mechanicalistic doctrines, first to take our attention, not only show his heritage from the past, but also, in addition to what has already been pointed out here, afford a very interesting example of an important principle in the development of science or of thought generally. A hint of this was given in an earlier paragraph when reference was made to one intellectual interest, becoming only mediate and yielding leadership to another. That sequence of interests or disciplines—dogmatic theology, mechanics, biology—is certainly more than just a sequence. Always in the sequence an earlier standpoint has become the medium or the method of what follows. The accepted reality of one time becomes only the way of looking, the formal useful points of view, say the working hypothesis, for the investigations of the next. In philosophical terms, an earlier century's metaphysics is a later century's methodology or epistemology. Just so, then, a pro-

gressing science or philosophy accumulates its useful standpoints and methods, its intellectual milieu, its categories, its mediating ideas or questions; exactly as for a progressing real life the cherished institutes of one era turn into the secular instruments of the next. All of which, I suppose, amounts only to saying, but I hope in a stimulating way, that new wine must always be put in old bottles. But fortunately or unfortunately, especially in times of critical transitions, men are all too likely to lag or lapse, confusing meaning with method, end with means. Many a scientist has done this, as well as many a practical man. Many a scientist has taken his working standpoint too seriously, hoarding it as does any miser, conceiving it as representing reality; and, to come now to the point, of those who have done just this Spencer is undoubtedly one; a notable example of it, too, for being both scientist and philosopher. Spencer has had mechanicalism for his manner of thought, his method, his phenomenology, while an organic world, the world of the biologist and evolutionist, has been the real object of his interest; and yet at least not clearly has he distinguished between the two. In his numerous changes of statement, as the years passed, there may be discoverable a growing feeling for the difference and so a freer biologism; but, on the whole, I am of the opinion that he never really escaped from his confusion of a standpoint and method, which the past had given his times, with the new meaning which was the real object. A biologist may have machinery in his laboratory; also he may picture mechanisms in the world he observes; and, studying specific positive acts and processes, he may actually find perfect mechanisms; but he may not stop with a purely mechanicalistic theory of the universe. Happily even our present hero did not stop there. He had, as has been said, his own occultism.

Perhaps, instead of going on with my tale, I should now give some illustrations, taken from Spencer's specific doctrines, of his mechanicalistic "possession." Before adducing such illustrations, however, I would consider his occultism, his very real although hidden super-mechanicalism, that the illustrations, when introduced, may illustrate this also. In his occultism Spencer will be seen a third time to have fallen between. Neither scientist nor philosopher, neither mechanicalistic nor freely biologistic, he proves also to be in between the traditional occultism and a natural, consistent evolutionism. A certain surviving, albeit secularized and disguised spiritualism —notice the small initial letter—has a real hold on his rationalistic science-and-philosophy.

Like most if not all of the earlier modern evolutionists, Spencer undoubtedly labored under a sort of tradition, I would almost go so far as to say a superstition, of an external, quite separately real, independent and objective environment, an outer and quite different world; persisting notion from earlier centuries. Evolution and biologism generally were plainly bound to imply and, becoming clear as to their meaning, to assert the real and vital unity of man and nature, of organism and environment; but science came to the evolution-hypothesis with the habits of mind of the Middle Ages. Whatever the ultimate logical demands of the new theory, then, in a long-standing practise, man, as to his real worth and character, was one thing, a creature not of this earth; the natural world, quite another, external and alien; and by easy analogy, say anthropomorphically, any living creature, any organism, and its environment were simply accepted as constituting a similar dualism. From man down even to the incoherently quivering protoplasmic mass the living being was thought of as having in its life the old problem of adaptation to something not really of its kind. Exactly so in the centuries of the Church's domination man had to live at least for a time, with reference to alien surroundings, his real self being quite aloof. Even a century or two of rationalism, while largely dispelling from nature the ghosts—almost too substantial in the old days to be so called—and the occult and arbitrary powers of all sorts, had failed to dispell the general notion of nature being independent and external. This circumstance, I am sure, had much to do, in the first place, with evolution's early mechanicalism and, secondly, with evolution's indirect, when not open and direct, occultism. However perfect the machinery, institutional and official at first, then physical or natural, adaptations could not be secured without help from outside. Whether exercising an evil spirit or winning favor from a good one, man had to depend on very formal and mechanical rites, perhaps on strict exactness of some phrase or sentence, and then also on help from Heaven or, as our university bulletins would put it, "some equivalent."

That Spencer did hold positively to an external and alien environment, making his general view of evolution, as well as his specific doctrines, accord with this idea, has always seemed to me to be clearly indicated, among other ways, in his emphatic agnosticism already remarked here. Science, you will remember, as well as religion or theology, he insisted, was confronted, not with a merely relative, but with an absolute mystery. In ultimate character and reality nature, as well as God,

was absolutely beyond man's reach. It is true that in his autobiography Spencer complains that his Unknowable, as presented in his *First Principles of Philosophy*, was getting altogether too much attention, that many of his readers and critics were scarcely noticing anything else; while he himself regarded it as almost if not quite secondary in importance to his doctrines about the knowable. Why should so many of those readers imagine that the whole Synthetic Philosophy must stand or fall by the Unknowable? Yet herein, to my mind, Spencer was more puzzled than candid. Certainly he shows himself, to say the least, quite lacking in appreciation of his own philosophy and its agnosticism. His Unknowable was in reality a critical point—perhaps even his heel of Achilles. It summarily alienated the natural world and so did perpetuate the medieval tradition—whether for reactionary effects or for progress need not now be said—within the very camp of rationalistic science and philosophy. Towards the end of his life Spencer confesses that orthodox ideas had been positively repulsive to him, more so than had been either necessary or wise, and it may be that his earlier and over-impulsive reaction to orthodoxy only played a trick on him, rendering him unreflective, more opposed than critical, and so caught by his enemy unawares, as very often happens with negatives. In any case, in Spencer's philosophy man, with all other living creatures, is left still with the problem of salvation in an alien world and solution of this problem necessarily had to conform to type.

That Spencer himself preferred the word adjustment, adaptation or accommodation to the, to him, repulsive word salvation does not affect the issue at all. Like salvation, adaptation had to rely on blind, incoherent, undifferentiated mechanical reactions supplemented by help from outside. Spencer, again, did not call the source of this help God or Providence or anything so conventional and widely respectable; but he was not less a worshiper at the altar of the occult. What saved his creatures was Happy Chance! Bless-ed be its name! Rationalism had indeed dispelled the old occult powers; no longer were these the almost universally accredited agents of man's salvation—or of his destruction; but the spirit of medievalism still walked so long as Chance held the rôle of Providence. Truly I can read Spencer without having my hair stand on end—how violent metaphors do sometimes become!—for the ghostly notions I constantly meet in his books; but mine is after all a phlegmatic nature and, say what you will, although one's hair may lie quite flat, Spencer's philosophy, its mechanicalism, its supermechanicalism, its biologism and all, is only a sort of rationalistic distillation and objectification of the orthodox

scheme of salvation. If to say this is to seem to ridicule Spencer, I must insist that my purpose is not ridicule. Laugh good-naturedly we may; but our laughter is not necessarily derogatory. New theory has to depend, as was said, on old habits of thought for its mediation and humor is inevitable. Moreover, in the present instance, the salvation itself gets new meaning when it is found repeated in the adaptive activity requiring at once mechanism and favoring chance, of every living organism!

Spencer's biographers, including himself, make very clear the rationalistic influences of his up-bringing. So far as we know, he never even had formally to reject the old theology, because the problems it stirred up seem never to have arisen as serious problems for him. Constantly he was meeting men of liberal and independent views, of the scientific spirit, objective in their outlook. Early he showed antipathy towards classical studies and humanistic education generally. Miracles, more discussed in his day than in ours, puzzling so many, seemed not to puzzle him, for miracles there simply were not; and mere sentiment counted for nothing, for of course it is always conservative. Spencer's father, it is true, was a Methodist turned Quaker, his mother a Methodist without any turning whatever; but apparently just this difference in his home made him, as if in self-defense, *neuter in re*. All these influences, then, of Spencer's life contributed to making him rationalistic, intellectually cold and objective, and yet, as has been shown already and will develop further, his philosophy also bears the sure marks of his outgrown home as well as of conservative England at large, suggesting withal the persistent scent of Thomas Moore's still fragrant roses. Great changes may come to science and philosophy, theology yielding to biology; but, as with broken and shattered vases, the past is hard if not impossible to lose. A man may look with all candor at what lies quite without; he may court the wholly objective view; he may cast aside all that is institutional in letter or in spirit; but, to use as a figure what has its literal meaning too, he can not escape the fact that his parents gave him his eyes. Generalization, with its ever wider and deeper view and different valuations, may bring changes; but the new view or the new life must always conserve the past. Contempt for the old, accordingly, and blindness to the new are both lacking in realism, if not also in candor. In Spencer's case we have seen how his contempt may have been the cause of his blindness.

I turn, finally, to some illustrations among Spencer's doctrines. Perhaps I should consider first his comprehensive formula for evolution:

An integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes parallel transformations.

But, assuming that I could satisfactorily and intelligibly discuss that remarkable formula, focus of the Synthetic Philosophy, I fear I could not do so in the time at my disposal. Instead, therefore, I have chosen for your attention three lesser but wholly characteristic doctrines, making my selection somewhat at random. Thus, first, I shall consider the doctrine of adaptation or adjustment already in fact partially indicated; secondly, the doctrine of personal individualism; and, thirdly, that of the finally perfectly adjusted man; these doctrines coming from the Principles of Biology, the Principles of Sociology and the Principles of Ethics, respectively.

Spencer's doctrine of adaptation is a doctrine, shared by him with a contemporary Scottish philosopher of some note, Alexander Bain, and accordingly sometimes known as the Spencer-Bain theory, which pictures an organism, confronted by a strange environment, in a condition of action through random impulses, incoherent, undifferentiated nervous discharges, manifold indefinite mechanical reactions, and assumes that chance will bring a successful adaptation from one of these impulses, discharges, reactions. The theory thus takes very seriously the very familiar method of trial and error, except that the trials are wholly random and success has to depend quite on fortune. The more numerous the trials, obviously, the merrier the probability of a success and, I suppose, at infinity a success would be assured. An adaptation happily secured, this is, so to speak, registered and stored and becomes henceforth a line of least resistance for future action, say a definite activity in repertory. Of course, if any real change occur in the environment, the process must be renewed from the beginning; while with manifold renewals an accumulation of acts in repertory is effected and the organism acquires a complex and versatile life answering to its varied environment. The whole process, moreover, revealing the progress or development of the creature concerned, may be described, in terms already heard, as a passing "from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity," so that, after all, we are getting some understanding of Spencer's general formula for evolution. Parenthetically, if at times Spencer seems to us a bit commonplace and prosaic and even superficial, we must remember that his work belongs to the third quarter of the last century. Indeed his First Principles appeared in first edition over fifty years ago.

Spencer's doctrine, quite consistent within its premises, is to be criticized just for its premises. Before a wholly strange environment, which is assumed, any organism must be, or at once be rendered, quite incoherent, broken, without unity, not even vitally or really an organism, and so must depend on chance for success and on mere multiplication of chance successes for growth. But, as we know, consistent evolution can not suppose a strange, external environment. Accordingly the theory has at its start a false foundation. Indeed it is also more than questionable if the theory has any natural right to its claim of coherence being attained eventually; for not merely would adjustment, or evolution in general, depend on the occult in the form of happy chance, but also it would depend on the occult in the form of an agency of coherence. Coherence is certainly quite impossible against an alien environment and it can never be acquired by a mere manifold of successes. "Favor my random ventures," we who have ears hear Spencer's organism praying fervently to the Unknowable, to that absolutely mysterious Power behind all things; "Favor my ventures and, above all, give me, unworthy and hopelessly broken creature that I am, a real and an abiding coherence;" and, while sympathetically we who have hearts may hope that so earnest a prayer will be answered abundantly, we have once more to be entertained. That a creature of Spencer's should be thus brought to kneeling and piety!

The life of an organism Spencer defines as "the power of continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations." Here, then, is further light on his doctrine of adjustment. Professor John Watson finds the definition true enough physically or mechanically, but inadequate biologically.[3] A stone's power of adjustment, as it settles, for example, in the yielding earth or as it meets the blow of the shattering hammer, might be so described; but "a living being [with its own internal relations] is a unity in a different sense from that in which we speak of a stone." A living being, an organism, must be originally and persistently endowed with an inviolable unity and self-identity and therefore must not for a moment be thought of as ever adjusting itself to an environment so external or in such a way external as to violate that unity or identity and in consequence to require a miraculous restoration. So is Watson's criticism quite in line with that suggested here. Moreover, Watson's emphasis on the differences between unity or coherence of a stone and that of an organism and again between the processes of adjustment of the two unities to their

[3] "Comte, Mill and Spencer." By John Watson, LL.D. Pp. 103 sq. The Macmillan Company. 1895.

respective external surroundings has suggested to me that, meeting in Spencer's philosophy, are to be found, not only two ideas of unity, the mechanical and the biological, and two corresponding ideas of adjustment, but also two ideas of the external. In any case, had Spencer and others of his time really appreciated that biologism and its evolution-hypothesis were bringing to human consciousness and feeling, to be of value both in common human practise and in general scientific theory, a qualitatively different external world, external I mean under a distinctly new valuation, in a distinctly new sense, from that of earlier centuries, I am sure they would not have taken the theory of random discharges, chance successes, and only eventual and virtually magically given coherence quite so literally. Historically unity, adjustment, externality are by no means univocal terms and it is simple-minded and prosaic to suppose them so. Theology, mechanics and biology have given each one three different meanings. A little more poetry in Spencer's worthy soul had served him well! And yet, when all is said, it may be added, as the final word, that in thinking as in life to hasten progress is often to obstruct it.

Secondly, I would consider with you Spencer's personal individualism. This appears in various ways and places; in his writings on education, urging primary regard for the individual; in his hedonistic ethics; in his political papers, assertively democratic; and, especially, in his Sociology. In the last under evident pressure from the tendency to biologism and from the biological idea of organism, but under pressure also from old habits of thinking, he raises the question of society being an organism and decides to concede organic character only under what some would style, with timely allusion, senatorial reservations. Certainly outwardly society remains, when Spencer has finished, no organism at all and individuality appears to have lost none of its traditional prerogatives. Yet, of course, there was progress in the mere putting of the question and possibly, had Spencer asked, not if society were an organism, but if it were organic, his conclusion had been different. The latter query had allowed some imagination. He held back, however, here as in other matters. He did find certain similarities of society to an organism: Both commonly, normally, increase in size, as they get older; in complexity, too, and in interdependence of parts; and both are wholes that live on in spite of, or even because of, the death of their parts. Still none of these things show any very deep notion of what constitutes real organic character and, if they did in any degree, the intended argument would be discredited so soon as the four points of dissimilarity, emphasized by Spencer, had been re-

marked. Thus, unlike an organism, society has no visible form and no continuity of mass and has distinctly autonomous parts and parts each with its own independent consciousness. How superficial this is both as to its dissimilarities and as to its similarities; how dependent the argument of it, pro and con, on inadequate tests. Why dwell on questions of mere mass and continuity that must be irrelevant? Why fall back on autonomy and independent consciousness, when these, as sure to be understood, can only obscure the real point? Why let the idea of organism, individual or social, suffer thus from traditional physical tests, on the one hand, and traditional notions of the individual as an unworldly, spiritual being, on the other, when the idea itself was really a call for important revisions of both? Spencer's argument, then, proves and disproves nothing. Nevertheless, there was, I repeat, progress in the mere putting of the question. Any important question or issue, once clearly put, is always stronger than the superficial ways in which it may be attacked and momentarily solved or than the conventional reservations with which its solution may be compromised or more seriously obstructed.

Possibly, to indulge my own imagination, Spencer was thinking of society as confronted, like an individual, with a strange and hostile environment and so rendered inorganic, incoherent, loosely pluralistic; but, whether this was the imagery in his mind or not, his conclusion of a pluralistic individualism is wholly consistent with it and with its various conservative implications. Even an individual organism, we should remember, was made incoherent, a loose plurality of acts, by its external surroundings and, neither originally nor eventually, could honestly claim any true organic character of its own. Why! On this showing Spencer might have said that society was at least as organic as any organism! His insistent individualism had really suffered no serious shock thereby. As to his intellectual conservatism, which we are constantly confronting, there is surely in it a suggestion of the reserve which the Englishman has seldom if ever failed to exhibit, holding to his past in his most progressive moves whether of thought or of life.

For the rest, in this account of Spencer's individualism and his hesitation to see anything really organic in society, I would say, even a third time, that his question alone was a step forward. Indeed this is true of his other characteristic queries. While so many of his various answers were soon discredited, the questions themselves were vital and the new direction which they undoubtedly gave to scientific interest was significant and productive. He may have resented the old humanities, senti-

ment, orthodoxy and other things in kind; but he turned science to human affairs in a very effective way. Is society organic? What really is this thing we have been calling life? How indeed do organisms accomplish their undoubtedly successful adaptations to environment? Or human creatures, individually or socially, to the natural world? Prophetic and creative interests, all of these; getting from Spencer only constrained and inadequate answers, but only more persistent as questions on this account.

Lastly, Spencer was an evolutional perfectionist. All in good time, but by gradual evolution, not by cataclysmic upheaval, the millennium would arrive! Spencer's doctrine of the finally perfectly adapted man, or of the finally perfectly adapted humanity, is to my mind at once the most significant and the most characteristic of all his doctrines. It shows him so clearly "in between" the old and the new. It shows him bringing spiritual man to earth, but also raising earth at last to an only Golden Heaven. Every day will be Sunday by and by! Not that Spencer said this in such words; but such was his vision. What he did say to that effect is worth quoting even at some length. In his "Data of Ethics," a late work appearing in 1882,[4] after apologizing and elaborately explaining himself for distinguishing between an absolute and a relative ethics and for the apparently resulting dualism, with one code for creatures not of this present earth, and another for present earthly and commonly human creatures, he proceeds as follows:

> The alleged necessary precedence of Absolute Ethics over Relative Ethics is thus, I think, further elucidated. One who has followed the general argument thus far, will not deny that an ideal social being may be conceived as so constituted that his spontaneous activities are congruous with the conditions imposed by the social environment formed by other such beings. In many places, and in various ways, I have argued that conformably with the laws of evolution in general, and conformably with the laws of organization in particular, there has been, and is, in progress, an adaptation of humanity to the social state, changing it in the direction of such an ideal congruity. And the corollary before drawn and here repeated, is that the ultimate man is one in whom this process has gone so far as to produce a correspondence between all the promptings of his nature and all the requirements of his life as carried on in society. If so, it is a necessary implication that there exists an ideal code of conduct formulating the behavior of the completely adapted man in the completely evolved society. Such a code is that here called Absolute Ethics as distinguished from Relative Ethics—a code the injunctions of which are to be considered as absolutely right in contrast with those that are relatively right or least wrong; and which, as a system of ideal conduct, is to serve as a standard for our guidance in solving, as well as we can, the problems of real conduct.

[4] The "First Principles" was published in 1862.

So wrote Spencer, scientist and philosopher; evolutionist, too; but under restraint, being also perfectionist and, except that he set no thousand year limit, millenniumist. All in good time, he assures us absolute right will have become as natural as it is right and, man having then come to a perfect correspondence between his natural promptings and the requirements or obligations of his surroundings, between his internal relations and their external relations, the true and absolute ethics, so impractical now, will be practical as well as true, and confidently and safely can be installed or promulgated; being of course for the imperfect present only ideal, abstract, otherworldly. Safely, I said, because, according to Spencer, who would bring his ideal to earth, the moral ideal is pleasure. Only perfect men can safely be pleasure-seekers; not so, *human* men. Herbert Spencer should have read William Paley, who at the close of the eighteenth century had successfully shown the hedonistic character of orthodox Christianity.[5]

Spencer's philosophy, I conclude, is an imprisoned biology or biologism. In form and spirit it is often conventional, traditional, commonplace, prosaic; its manner of expression, its literary style, shows the one-sided character of his education; but also, as a philosophy, it is productively quick with real, insistent and especially in his day very timely problems. He himself had great confidence, a Britisher's confidence, in his work; as is shown, if showing be necessary, by his remarkable persistence and accomplishment under circumstances of invalidism that would have discouraged others. It must be a real tribute to him, much more positive than that quoted from Royce, that we can see, as it were, looking out from behind the imprisoning bars, the new view of life and the world, which biologism, suceeding seventeenth and eighteenth century mechanicalism, has really effected.

[5] Spencer's millennial perfectionism, it is worth while observing, illuminates a certain point, not indeed touched upon here, of his sociological doctrine. Perfection accomplished, there will be, it is true, perfect accord between individuals and society; but up to the time of such accomplishment individuals, exactly as Spencer represents, must always be naturally more or less anti-social or at least assertively independent of the body politic, and society as served by the state must therefore be at all times more or less compulsive or tyrannical and in periods of war or crisis of any kind distinctly so.